SR 167 CORRIDOR ADOPTION
PUYALLUP TO SR 509
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

BRIEF HISTORY

Planning for the lower Puyallup Valley section of State Route 167 began more than 30 years ago when freeway corridors for I-5, SR 167, SR 410, and SR 512 were proposed. The general freeway and interchange locations for SR 167 between North Puyallup and I-5 at the Port of Tacoma Road interchange were determined in the 1950s. In the early 1960s, the I-5/Port of Tacoma Road interchange was constructed to provide a future connection to SR 167. An SR 167 route hearing was held in June 1966, and a design report was issued in 1968.

An alignment near the center of the corridor bounded on the south by the Puyallup River and North Levee Road and on the north by the Union Pacific Railroad was the subject of a design hearing in December 1969 and an access report released in October 1970. Further work came to a halt at this time primarily because of the uncertainty over ownership of portions of the proposed right-of-way within the Puyallup Indian Reservation. By the late 1980s, the SR 167 freeway was complete as a four-lane facility from I-405 in Renton to SR 512 in Puyallup.

In 1976, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) prepared a study to address traffic congestion and safety problems related to the termination of SR 167 at Meridian Street (SR 161) in Puyallup and the use of River Road and Valley Avenue for truck and general traffic access to the I-5 corridor and the Port of Tacoma. The 1976 study recommended that a new alignment be added to the Puget Sound Council of Governments Transportation Improvement Plan ". . . subject to a more refined study as to a precise location and design for the route."

In September 1988, the Cascade Corridor Task Force of the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County recommended the completion of SR 167 to I-5 in the vicinity of Fife. Funds were made available by the legislature in March 1990. The corridor study began in April 1990.

TIERED EIS

It was determined that the project would have significant adverse environmental impact and that an environmental impact statement (EIS) would be required under both federal and State requirements. At that time it was determined that use of a tiered EIS would be appropriate for this project. Under this concept, two EIS documents are produced; the Tier I EIS considers the location and environmental aspects of various corridors and courses of action. The studies are of a more general nature, to the extent necessary for a fair and adequate comparison. The Tier I EIS results in the selection of a "build" corridor or a lesser course of action. Then, the Tier II EIS studies design and environmental aspects very specifically, as they relate to impacts within the selected corridor. Use of the tiered concept for this project allowed selection of a preferred

alternative. The WSDOT can now begin detailed environmental documentation (the Tier II EIS) in an area experiencing rapid growth and development.

The Tier I final environmental impact statement (FEIS) is now complete, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is required, under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA), to issue this Record of Decision (ROD).

RECORD OF DECISION

The FHWA concurs with WSDOT in the selection of Alternative 2 for improving State Route 167 (SR 167) from Puyallup to State Route 509 (SR 509). Alternative 2 is the preferred Alternative in the FEIS, based on impacts identified during the Tier I analysis, comments received from resource agencies, comments on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), comments from the public at the DEIS hearing, letters received during the DEIS comment period, results of a Major Investment Study (MIS), and environmental studies/conclusions included in the FEIS. A complete description of all alternatives studied, including general design elements sufficient to compare alternatives and environmental impacts, is included in the Tier I FEIS (FHWA-WA-EIS-1993-2-F). A summarized description of the preferred alternative is included in this ROD. The FEIS was signed March 30, 1999, and issued to the public and regulatory agencies on April 23, 1999. The FEIS is available from the Washington Division of FHWA and the Olympic Region of WSDOT at a cost of $45. Upon issuance of the ROD, studies will begin immediately on the specific design features within the Alternative 2 corridor, and their environmental impacts, including mitigation of those impacts as feasible. These studies will result in a Tier II DEIS, public hearing, FEIS, and ROD. An extensive public involvement program will be implemented by WSDOT during the Tier II analysis/documentation process.

As stated in the Tier I FEIS, the purpose of the proposed action is to improve regional mobility of the transportation system and to serve multimodal local and port freight movement and passenger movement between the Puyallup termini of SR 167, SR 410, and SR 512 and the Interstate 5 corridor, the new SR 509 freeway, and the Port of Tacoma. Furthermore, the project is to reduce congestion and improve safety on the arterials and intersections in the study area, provide improved system continuity between the SR 167 corridor and I-5, and maintain or improve air quality in the corridor to ensure compliance with the current State Implementation Plan (SIP) and all requirements of the Clean Air ACT (CAA).

This project is consistent with the transportation policies of the cities of Tacoma, Puyallup, and Fife, and of Pierce County, in that it improves mobility of both people and goods, improves safety, and improves air quality. The project is consistent with the long-range development plans of these jurisdictions in that all of the affected lands located within the project are currently zoned for Industrial, Commercial, and Residential uses. As noted in the project history cited above, considerable development is occurring now and has been under way for a number of years. It is possible that the project may hasten future development in the project area.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred alternative, Corridor 2, (fully described in the FEIS and summarized below) was evaluated and chosen during the DEIS and FEIS process. The evaluation was based on various discipline studies conducted for the project, the transportation needs met or not met by the various alternatives, interagency coordination, and response to agency and public comments on the project. This information was summarized and presented in the DEIS and FEIS. So far as can be determined in a Tier I study, the selected alternative incorporates all practicable measures to minimize environmental harm. The more detailed studies in Tier II are expected to refine these practicalities to further minimize environmental harm within the Alternative 2 corridor. Features of the selected alternative are as follows:

First and foremost, the new freeway will be designed in accordance with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) standards for a Principal Arterial (P-1) highway. This means it will be a freeway. No private driveways or public road intersections will be allowed. Public access will only be by interchange ramps. It will be designed to be safe at a speed of 70 mph. Though the details of the freeway design are subject to the Tier II studies, it is expected that there will be a minimum of two through-traffic lanes in each direction, with provision for future addition of one High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction. Even though, depending on need and available funding, the HOV lanes may not be built during the first stage, the remainder of the project will be designed to make room for them. This includes adequate drainage, extra width built into the medians of both SR 167 and I-5 for HOV to HOV ramps, and design of an interchange at I-5 to accommodate additional bridges for these HOV connectors.

The Alternative 2 corridor, and the design used to study this corridor, are shown on Figure 1 (Figure 1 is the same as figure 3-4 in the FEIS) and described below. The design may change during Tier II studies to optimize design and environmental considerations; for example, bridges may go over, rather than under, a local road.

Beginning at the west end of the proposed project, there will be an interchange with SR 509, in the vicinity of the westward extension of 8th Street East. This interchange is expected to incorporate flyover ramps to and from the southwest on SR 509 and east on SR 167. The SR 167 roadway will remain above the surrounding grade, probably on an embankment, until it crosses over 54th Avenue East, about midway between 4th Street East and 8th Street East. At this point, there is expected to be a “half diamond” interchange, with ramps only to and from the east. To the east of 54th Avenue East, the freeway will descend to a level that will be above potential flooding of Hylebos Creek, and will turn toward the southeast, parallel to Hylebos Creek and far enough from it to minimize environmental harm to the creek and its habitat resource.

A frontage road is planned on the southwest side of SR 167 to join 8th Street East and 62nd Avenue East. A new bridge, including approach embankments at each end, will carry 12th Street East over the new freeway. Prior to reaching SR 99, the freeway grade will climb high enough to cross over SR 99, SR 5, and 70th Avenue East. The I-5 crossing is expected to be just southwest of the existing 70th Avenue East Bridge over I-5. At this point, there will be a major, freeway-to-freeway, interchange between SR 167 and I-5. This will require numerous bridges, with roadways on at least three levels. Considerable relocation of existing homes and businesses will be necessary here. While this Tier I study indicates separate structures crossing SR 99, I-5, and 70th Avenue East, Tier II studies may combine some of these for better flood passage, improvement to stream and streamside habitat, small animal passage, and aesthetics. The SR 167 grade will then descend to pass under a new bridge at 20th Street East. This bridge will require approach embankments to the east and west to rejoin the existing grade of 20th. About ¼ mile south of 20th, SR 167 will turn directly south and will be positioned about halfway between 70th Avenue East and 82nd Avenue East. It will then ascend to pass over Valley Avenue East and the Union Pacific railroad. An interchange is proposed with Valley Avenue East. After crossing the railroad, SR 167 will descend and turn southeasterly, crossing 82nd Avenue East (Freeman Road) about midway between the railroad and 48th Street East. A new bridge, including approach embankments, will carry 82nd Avenue East over SR 167 at this point. About ½ mile west of Meridian Street (SR 161), the alignment will turn easterly to an extension of the alignment of existing SR 167 where it presently terminates east of SR 161. SR 167 will bridge over SR 161, new ramps will be constructed to and from the west, and the existing ramps to and from the east will be revised as necessary to meet the latest interchange design standards.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

At the beginning of the Tier I study, many possible corridor segments were considered (see Figure 2). These were narrowed to three corridors, designated as Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 (see Figure 3). (Figures 2 and 3 are the same as Figures 3-1 and 2 from the FEIS.) In addition, the "no-action" alternative was studied. Subsequent to the DEIS, a Major Investment Study (MIS) was completed in which a "strategic arterial" (primarily major improvement to Valley Avenue East) and maximum use of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) were studied. Finally, in answer to comments made by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with regard to the DEIS, a "suite" alternative (maximum use of the best parts of all of the "no build" alternatives) was investigated.

Alternative 2, discussed above, is the preferred alternative. It was selected because it:

- Meets the purpose and need of the project;
- Reduces congestion, provides for future HOV facilities, and improves safety;
- Is the most cost-effective alternative;
- Is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative;
- Provides the best access to the Port of Tacoma, resulting in greater freight mobility.

Alternative 1, as with the other two "build" alternatives, meets the purpose and need of the project, reduces congestion, provides for future HOV facilities, improves safety, and provides improved access to the Port of Tacoma. However, it was not selected because it:

- Adds congestion to the already badly congested Port of Tacoma Road interchange;
- Would not improve safety or capacity as much as Alternative 2;
- Would not provide improved freight mobility;
- Has more environmental impact in some areas, such as wetlands and farmlands.
- Crosses Puyallup Tribal settlement land.

Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2, but includes an at-grade connection to SR 509 and realignment of the 54th Avenue East/Taylor Way northbound lane. This Alternative also meets the purpose and need of the project, reduces congestion, provides for future HOV facilities, improves safety, and provides improved access to the Port of Tacoma. However, it was not selected because:

- The at-grade connection would not improve safety or capacity as much as Alternative 2;
- The at-grade connection would not provide good freight mobility;
- It affects more wetlands than Alternative 2.

The "No Action" Alternative would not result in immediate impact on the natural environment, and would have no design and construction cost. However, it was not selected because it:

- Would not meet the purpose and need of the project;
- Would result in intolerable congestion on existing roads and streets;
- Would worsen traffic safety, because of the congestion;
- Would increase air pollution;
- Would not reduce impact to the natural environment over time, because the entire area will be developed to industrial, commercial, and residential uses;
- Would not contribute to improved freight mobility.

The Strategic Arterial Alternative would not add a new corridor through existing homes and farms. However, it was not selected because it:

- Would not meet the purpose and need of the project;
- Would have a devastating effect on existing homes and business along existing arterials which would require widening;
- Would require the purchase of Puyallup Tribal Trust land along Valley Avenue East;
- Would not improve safety, capacity, or freight mobility as much as Alternatives 1, 2, or 3.

The Stand-Alone TDM/TSM Alternative would result in a minimal improvement in capacity, as compared to the no action alternative, and would have low initial cost. However, it was not selected because it:

- Would not meet the purpose and need of the project;
- Is little better than the "no action" alternative.

The Suite Alternative would improve on the TDM/TSM alternative to some extent and would be less in initial cost than a "build" alternative. However, it was not selected because it:

- Would not meet the purpose and need of the project;
- Has the same deficiencies as the alternatives it attempts to combine.

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM

Implementation of the preferred alternative, Alternative 2, will include all mitigation measures described in the FEIS. Furthermore, the detailed design and further environmental studies to be conducted during the Tier II EIS process will make it possible to further avoid, minimize or mitigate environmental problems described in Tier I. Specific measures listed in the Tier I document follow:

- Planning for staging, detours, and temporary traffic control will be designed to maximize safety and the free flow of traffic during construction.
- Drainage design will emphasize reduction in erosion and transport of silt from the project. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be specified for use during construction, when the potential for this problem is greatest.
- Areas subject to settlement under new embankment will be preloaded. The possibility of this affecting subdrainage from adjacent properties will be investigated, and designs will be proposed to minimize this possibility.
- Embankments and structures will be designed, to the extent practicable, to pass maximum flood flows without significant change to that experienced today. If necessary, additional flood storage will be provided.
- Any unavoidable loss of wetlands attributable to the project will be compensated for by implementing a wetland mitigation plan. There will be no net loss of wetland function or area.
- A further assessment of potential hazardous waste sites will be performed during the Tier II studies. General recommendations for mitigation will be provided then, as well as recommendations for further investigations or remedial actions during the design or construction stages.
- The Tier I studies did not find any instance where land would be required that is or will be a public park and subject to additional study under section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act. This will be reaffirmed during Tier II.
- An archaeological survey will be done as part of the Tier II studies and, if any resource is found, appropriate measures will be taken. If any archaeological resources are found during construction, work will be halted for site analysis and appropriate action will be taken, including coordination with the Puyallup Tribe and the State Historic Preservation Office.
- The area will be canvassed for possible historic buildings, and appropriate action will be taken for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, if any are found.
- WSDOT will work closely with the Puyallup Tribe during the entire Tier II process regarding fisheries and other issues which concern them. This will continue through design and construction.

- A Citizens Advisory Committee will be formed to allow representatives of the public to evaluate alternatives that will encourage a balance of the issues that are important to the community, but still allow the purpose and need of the project to be met.
- The State Salmonid Recovery Plan, being finalized jointly by several State agencies, must be complied with by WSDOT and other state agencies. Detailed design efforts will attempt to save the historic Carson chestnut tree within the SR167/SR 161 interchange.
- Specific impacts to wildlife habitat will be addressed during Tier II studies, and an attempt will be made to mitigate any losses. Often, the relatively undisturbed areas within the right-of-way fences provide replacement habitat, despite traffic noise.
- The recommendations included in "*Commencement Bay Restoration Plan and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Natural Resource Restoration – Volume II: Restoration Plan"* will be incorporated to the extent practicable.
- WSDOT will aggressively pursue new opportunities in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) for enhancing mitigation.
- Design efforts will attempt to avoid a specific impact, as first priority. If this is not possible, the required sequencing for minimizing and mitigating will follow.
- A project level conformity analysis for air quality will be done.
- Coordination with the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) regarding issues such as prime and unique farmland will be continued in Tier II. A form AD 1006 will be requested from NRCS.
- Design-specific noise analyses will be performed. These will assist in attempts to avoid or minimize noise impacts or, if necessary, provide appropriate mitigation.
- Every feasible option for mitigating impacts to existing farms will be investigated. This may include land trades, additional equipment or storage sheds, or payment for damages.
- A pedestrian overpass will be considered at the Puyallup Recreation Center. Further coordination with the Puyallup Tribe will be required.
- The WSDOT has committed to the Puyallup Tribe to provide landscaped noise abatement structures along 48th Street East to mitigate noise impacts to tribal trust land.
- WSDOT will assist the Puyallup Tribe in locating new businesses to minimize noise and visual impacts attributable to SR 167, by sharing noise study data and advising the Tribe as to quieter locations, landscaping, and mitigation measures.
- TDM/TSM features will be utilized in final design to the extent feasible.
- Owners and renters of homes and businesses displaced by the project will receive relocation assistance in accordance with the Uniform Relocation and Assistance Act of 1970, as amended.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

The WSDOT Olympic Region Administrator, located in Tumwater, Washington, will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing mitigation measures. Specific monitoring requirements will be determined in the Tier II FEIS.

Required Permits, Licenses, and Clearances:

• Shoreline Substantial Development	Pierce County, Fife, Puyallup
• New access to the Interstate System	Federal Highway Administration
• Section 404 permit	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
• Floodplain Regulatory Permits	Tacoma, Pierce County, Fife, Puyallup
• Water Quality Certification (Sec. 401 Permit)	WA Dept. of Ecology & Puyallup Tribe
• Hydraulic Project Approval	Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
• NPDES Permit	Washington Dept. of Ecology
• Critical Areas Ordinances	Pierce County, Fife, Puyallup
• Biological Assessment	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service
• Forest Practices permit	Wash. Dept of Natural Resources

COMMENTS ON THE FINAL EIS

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources advised that a forest practices permit will be required for harvest of any timber associated with this project. This has been added to the listing of permits above.

CONCLUSION

The selected alternative (Alternative 2) is judged to be the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative. The process used to select this alternative reflects the fundamental purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act process, as stated in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations: To help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. Comments received on the DEIS were included in the FEIS, together with responses thereto. A detailed MIS was done, which included studies of several additional potential alternatives. Because of the length of time between the DEIS and the FEIS, considerable effort was expended to update all significant data and to ensure that new data was considered prior to settling on a specific alternative.

The purpose of the Tier I FEIS is to select a corridor. We concur that the best corridor option was selected. Now, a detailed design and environmental analysis will be done as part of the Tier II process. At the conclusion of the Tier II process, a final design and final mitigation measures will be adopted. Subsequent to the studies required in the Tier II process, the selected alignment of a facility within the adopted corridor will be developed as environmentally conscientious as possible.

Date: June ___, 1999

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